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EPITAPH OF
DIETZMANN, LANDGRAVE OF
THURINGIA,

ASCRIBED TO DANTE.

BY
CHARLES ELIOT NORTON.

EPITAPH OF
DIETZMANN, LANDGRAVE OF THURINGIA,

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Among the papers left by Carlyle was an envelope addressed to him, on which he had written : —

“The (soi-disant) *Dante Inscription* on *Titzmann's* Tomb at Leipzig (May, 1855). [No probability of its being genuine : seemingly not the least knowledge to judge about it, in Italy among “the learned.”]”

The envelope contained the following note from Carlyle's friend, Count Pepoli : —

MY DEAR MR. CARLYLE : Here is the copy of a letter from Doctor A. Torri to the Countess Allighieri-Gozzadini upon the Epitaph attributed to Dante.

This Lady tells me that many other literati partake the opinion of the learned Doctor.

I am truly yours

C. PEPOLI.

The 1st of May, 1855.

11 ST. GEORGE'S TERRACE, NEW KENSINGTON.

To TH: CARLYLE Esqr.

5 Cheyne Row,
Chelsea.

The copy referred to was on a separate sheet, and was as follows : —

LATINA EPIGRAFE ATTRIBUITA A DANTE, ETC.

Il Dottor Alessandro Torri celebre collettore di tutte le cose che si riferiscono a Dante, scrive così da Pisa alla Contessa Allighieri :

“Già da ben otto anni io conosceva la iscrizione o epitaffio metrico latino attribuito a Dante pel Langravio di Turingia Dieterico Tizmanno, avendolo pubblicato con illustrazioni fino dall' a : 1846 il Cav^{re} Carlo

Promis nell' *Antologia* di Torino, fascicolo 1^o Luglio, pagine 99-107. Fattone ora riscontro colla copia ch' Ella ebbe da Londra trovai alcune lievi differenze, ma una *non* lieve nel v. 2 del disticho 10: e tutte qui le vedrà da me trascritte. Il Cavalier Promis mostrasi persuaso della originalità della Iscrizione riguardo a Dante, ed io pure vorrei essere del sentimento suo, ma m' imbarazzano le Date sottopostevi, oltre ad altre considerazioni che mi fanno dubbioso. Nondimeno dica al Conte C. Pepoli (cui ricambio cordialissimi saluti) ed al inglese letterato Mr Carlyle, che io ristamperò l'Iscrizione nel ultimo dei volumi delle Opere Minori Dantesche (Tomo VI) destinato alle poesie liriche, avendomi permesso il sud^{to} Cavaliere di far uso delle sue illustrazioni molto ingegnose nel sostenere il proprio parere."

Here follows a list of the variants referred to, with two or three brief notes upon them by Carlyle, and on the back of the leaf are other notes by him on the German authorities for the inscription and on its various readings, closing with "Enough! (25 April, 1855)."

At this time Carlyle was hard at work on his "Life of Frederick," which had been seriously begun about two years before, toiling, as he said, on his "dim dreary course through 'the desert of Brandenburg sand,'" and it was in his study of the early history of the Hohenzollerns that he had come across this epitaph ascribed to Dante, and, moved by his lifelong interest in the poet, desired to satisfy himself concerning its genuineness.

Although there is little reason for supposing Dante to have been the author of the inscription, yet the fact that it was long since attributed to him, and that some later scholars have maintained its genuineness, give to it a certain interest in the eyes of the student of Dante's work. As appears from his letter, it was Dr. Torri's intention to print it in the final volume of his edition of the Minor Works of Dante, but this volume was never published, and so far as I am aware, the epitaph is not to be found in any book easily accessible to the student. It seems therefore worth while to reprint it, with some account of its origin and fate. There is the further reason for doing so that its subject was a victim of the "Alberto Tedesco" denounced by Dante for his neglect of the garden of the empire, in the well-known magnificent verses in the sixth canto of the *Purgatory*.

This Alberto was Albert I., Kaiser from 1298 to 1308. "Albert," says Carlyle ("History of Frederick the Great," Book ii. ch. 9), "was by no means a prepossessing man, though a tough and hungry one . . . a Kaiser dreadfully fond of earthly goods, too. Who indeed grasped all round him, at property half his, or wholly not his: Rhine-tolls, Crown of Bohemia, Landgraviate of Thüringen, Swiss Forest Cantons, Crown of Hungary, Crown of France even:—getting endless quarrels on his hands, and much defeat mixed with any victory there was. Poor soul, he had six-and-twenty children by one wife; and felt that there was need of apanages! He is understood (guessed, not proved) to have instigated two assassinations in pursuit of these objects: and he very clearly underwent *one* in his own person. Assassination first, was of Dietzmann the Thüringian Landgraf, an Anti-Albert champion, who refused to be robbed by Albert,—for whom the great Dante is (with almost palpable absurdity) fabled to have written an Epitaph still legible in the Church at Leipzig."

Dietzmann was assassinated in December, 1307 (the day is variously given by different authorities), at night, in the Church of St. Thomas at Leipzig.*

* Dietzmann was the younger brother of Frederick, Landgrave of Thuringia, known as *Fredericus Fortis*, or still better as *Fredericus Ad-morsus*, in German *Friedrich mit der gebissenen Wange*. They were the children of Albert, Landgrave of Thuringia, whose evil nature and wicked deeds gained for him the appellation of *degener*, and of Margaret, daughter of the great Emperor Frederick II. It was a hard fate for her to be transferred from the splendor and refinement of her father's court at Palermo to the cold and rude surroundings of the Thuringian landgrave, and its pathos deepened into tragedy. After several unhappy years of marriage, her husband plotted her murder. The plot was revealed to her by the poor fellow whom Albert had hired for the deed, and she was forced to fly hastily by night from the old hill-castle of Wartburg. "Dum colliguntur a ministris quæ viderentur necessaria, ipsa in cubiculum suorum filiorum properat, et inter oscula atque amplexus, suam miseriam, filiorum deplorat solitudinem, et mente intuetur futuram calamitatem. Fredericus trium annorum erat, Dicemanus anni unius et dimidii. Cum iis etiam atque etiam valedixisset fœmina in magna fortuna maxime ærumnosa, majoris natu incumbens cunis, dextram ejus malam morsu impetit. . . . Amoris perpetui hoc vulnus erit nota (inquit) et justî doloris testimonium." It was thus that Frederick

He was buried in the Church of St. Paul in the same city. "At that time," says Fabricius, in the work cited in the preceding note, "Dante Allighieri of Florence was in exile in Germany, a man excelling alike in genius and in dignities, for he was the most noble of the Tuscan poets of his time, and he had been one of the Council of Eight in his city. Admiring the virtue of these princes, he composed an epitaph which still exists at Leipzig cut in stone, in which he told the title and deeds of Dietzmann. According to the custom of those days, the epitaph is written in verse, of tolerable elegance, as follows." (p. 605.) This was, I believe, the first appearance of the epitaph in print. It was frequently reprinted in subsequent years in Germany, but it does not seem to have become known elsewhere till within a comparatively recent period.*

It was in 1846, as we have already seen in the letter of Doctor Alessandro Torri, that the epitaph was apparently printed for the first time in Italy, in an article by the Cavalier Carlo Promis. Promis rejects the statement of Fabricius that Dante as an exile was in Germany, but he nevertheless holds the epitaph to be his composition, and sug-

gained the designation of "The Bitten Cheek." The flight of Margaret was in June, 1270. She found refuge in a convent at Frankfort, and there she died in March of the next year. See pp. 589-590 of the posthumous work of the scholar, antiquary, and poet, Georg Fabricius, entitled *Originum illustrissimæ stirpis Saxonica libri septem*, Jena, 1597.

* It is to be found in S. Reyheri, *Monumenta Landgraviorum Thuringiæ et Marchionum Misniæ*, Gotha, 1692: reprinted in the second volume of Menckenius, *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum*, Leipzig, 1728: the inscription is on col. 845. It is also given in Tentzel's *Fredericus Fortis Redivivus, hoc est Vita et Fata Frederici Fortis sive Admorsæ, Landgravii Thuringiæ* in the same volume of Menckenius, col. 950. It is printed in *Variorum in Europa Itinerum Deliciæ: seu ex variis manuscriptis selectiora tantum inscriptionum maxime recentium monumenta . . . nuper collecta . . . a Nathane Chytræo*. Ed. secunda, 1599.

I have not seen the following works in which it is printed:—

C. Manlius, *Commentarii rerum Lusaticarum*, iv. 26: and *Epitome Comm. rerum Lus.* in Hoffmann's *Scriptores R. Lusat.* vol. i. 1719; V. Stepmann, *Inscript. Lips.* p. 13; Brotuffius, *Genealogia Anhaltina*, lib. ii. fol. 43.

gests that it may have been written at the instance of some friend or relative of Dietzmann who had accompanied Henry of Luxemburg on his fatal expedition to Italy in 1310. His only ground for believing in the genuineness of the inscription is the concurrence of the German historians who had reported it, which he considers "ne dà estrinseca e pianissima prova che sua sia quell' iscrizione," — a proof which the historical student of the present day will hardly regard as valid.

Fabricius states that the inscription was cut on stone, but his contemporary Christopher Manlius (Fabricius died in 1571, Manlius in 1575) in his *Commentariorum rerum Lusaticarum Epitome*, first published in 1719, gives a different account. He says that Dietzmann was buried opposite the High altar of the church, and, "sub effigie principis lapidea, affixi leguntur in *tabula chartacea* versus epitaphii doctissimi illa ætate in Italia viri Dantis Aligherii," Manlius seems to write from personal inspection, for he says further, "Epigramma totum cum apud alios non satis emendate legatur, integrum hic et correctissimum, hoc est minime correctum, sed originali simillimum ponere non pigebit." (I cite these words of Manlius from the article by Promis.)

But whether the epitaph was originally inscribed on stone or on paper is of little concern, for about the middle of the seventeenth century, Ernest the Pious, Duke of Saxe-Gotha and Altenburg, substituted for its earlier form a copy of it in bronze. Tentzel, writing toward the end of the century, says: "Nos Epitaphium damus ex tabulis æneis, quas Ernestus Pius, Dux Gothanus, magnis sumptibus æri incidi curavit." (Menckenius, ii. 950.) (Duke Ernest died in 1675, Tentzel in 1707.)

Such being the information which I was able to collect concerning the epitaph, I desired to learn if it was still in existence in the Paulinerkirche, and in the spring of 1899, I wrote to my friend, the eminent scholar, the late Rev. Professor Joseph Henry Thayer of Harvard University, then for a time resident at Leipzig, asking him to be so good as to make inquiry concerning it. Under date of April 12, 1899, he wrote to me: "Unfortunately the Paulinerkirche (which is the University 'chapel') is undergoing at present a complete internal

renovation from pavement to roof-tree, and its monuments are boxed and inaccessible: but I am promised access to Dietzmann's before I leave the city (in midsummer) and shall then be able to speak with something approximating to first-hand knowledge.

"Meantime I send you a collation of your manuscript with the text as given in Steche and Gurlitt's *Beschreibende Darstellung der älteren Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler des Königreichs Sachsen*, — a very careful and admirably illustrated work.*

"The inscription is described as to be found in the Southwest Chapel, on a wooden tablet, measuring 60 × 87 cm., which is framed in wood and bears letters in oil-paint apparently of the seventeenth century."

Professor Thayer wrote again on the 21st of June, as follows: —

"The renovated church was rededicated with very stately ceremonies on the 11th of this month, and the next day I began a search for the alleged inscription. Strange to say, it was nowhere to be found. The new cenotaph of stone surmounted by a full-length recumbent figure [of Dietzmann] (an idealized reproduction of the photograph given in Gurlitt), a work executed by the sculptor Rietschel (the father of the present professor and head-pastor), seems to have thrown the preceding memorial of the man into oblivion. No clue to the inscription could I get from Capellan, Baumeister, Baurath, Rector, or Decorator, till at length a servant brought it to light from a little closet where it had been tucked away probably for the moment and then forgotten. It is a slab of board some 35 inches by 23, and $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch thick, bearing the inscription painted in yellow Latin letters on a black ground. The typographical mistakes, *e. g.*, in l. 5 "*pianis*" for "*planis*," in l. 11 "*Brenburg*" for "*Bernburg*," and the general character of the lettering stamp it as a rude piece of work, and I can hardly believe it to be a century old. Beneath the inscription proper (as given in Fabricius) is added, evidently by the same hand,

'OBIIT VIII CAL: JAN: ANNO CHRISTI MCCLXXX
DANTES ALLIGERIUS FF.'

* Parts XVII. and XVIII. relating to Leipzig were published in 1895-1896.

"The error in the date (for 1307) and the mode in which it is ascribed to Dante evidently deprive it of any authoritative significance. I suspect, therefore, that Fabricius is the oldest and most trustworthy voucher for the singular story."

The inscription as given by Fabricius (p. 608) (very nearly as it now appears on the painted board) runs as follows. The other texts afford some various readings, of which I note those of importance. I take no note of mere varieties of spelling or typography. They appear mainly to proceed from the bronze plate set up by Ernest the Pious, for which the existing copy on wood seems to have been substituted. The letters appended to the various readings show their source, — T., Tentzel; R., Reyher; P., Promis; G., Gurlitt.

- Sum Dizemanus ego¹ : me olim genuere parentes,
 Albertus Princeps, Margaritæque pia.
 Imperium titulumque dedit Turingia² nobis,
 Marchia Lusatia, Misena & ipsa potens,
 5 Quaque³ patet vetus in planis Libonotria campis,
 Et quæ montano flumine Pleissa⁴ lauat.
 Frater erat Fridericus, item Mavortius heros
 Pro patria mecum prælia dura tulit.
 Nam superare datum est nobis victricibus armis,
 10 Boemiae populos, Saxoniaeque Duces.
 Marchio de Bernburg⁵ Vualdemar⁶ nomine dictus,
 Agmine devictus, vincula nostra tulit.
 Ascanius Princeps cecidit quoque cuspidem nostram :
 Sed vitam supplex is⁷ miser emeruit.
 15 Romulidum Reges Albertus, Adolfus, & alter,
 Non poterant nostras frangere Marte manus.
 Viribus, ô pietas, nostris sed terga dederunt :
 Cæsareis opibus tunc⁸ ego diues eram.

¹ Titz. ego sum Mannus, T., R., G. Tismannus ego sum, P.

² Thuringia, T., P.

³ Quæque, T., G.

⁴ Plisna, T., R., P.

⁵ Brenburg, R., G.

⁶ Waldemar.

⁷ hic, R., P.

⁸ tum, G.

- Innumeri nostro⁹ cæsi sunt ense¹⁰ Sueui,
 20 Audentes patrios sollicitare Deos.
 Omnia sic vici : durum sed vincere fatum
 Non potui, Lachesis quod dedit atra mihi.
 Obiicit illa mea crudelis¹¹ pectora ferro,
 In medio incautus dum steteram¹² Ecclesiæ.
 25 Sic victor victus cecidi virtute : triumphos¹³
 Et laudes meritas non rapit¹⁴ vlla dies.

The assertion of Fabricius, and the ascription to Dante in the words added to the epitaph appear to be the only external evidences in respect to his authorship of it. No weight can be given to either: both may be founded on an untrustworthy tradition of uncertain origin. The determination of the question whether or not the verses were written by Dante rests consequently upon the evidence which they themselves afford, and this is amply sufficient. There is no touch in them of poetic imagination or expression. They are essentially commonplace, and such as any second-rate scholar in the fourteenth century might have produced. They bear no likeness in style to Dante's genuine Latin poems.* They exhibit a knowledge of persons, localities,

⁹ nostri, G.

¹⁰ omitted, G.

¹¹ o crudelis! R. meo crudelis! P.

¹² Dum steteram incautus in medio, T., R., P.

¹³ cecidi sed nulla virtute triumphos, G.

¹⁴ dedit. This and the preceding (13) are noted in the margin by R.

In verse 4 Misena stands for the Mark of Meissen; Libonotria, in verse 5, is a pedantic designation of, probably, the southern district of Thuringia; v. 6, Pleissa is the Pleiss which flows through Meissen, and enters the Elster not far from Leipsic; v. 11, Bernburg is the chief town of the Duchy of Anhalt-Bernburg; v. 13, Ascanius can hardly be identified: he was doubtless one of the many members of the Ascanien line of Markgraves of Brandenburg, who derived their name from Ascanica, a stronghold in lower Saxony not far from Halberstadt; v. 15, By the "et alter," to which the poet was compelled by the necessity of his verse, the Emperor Rudolph of Hapsburg (1273-1291) seems to be designated; v. 19, Suevi: who are intended by this name can hardly be ascertained, and the meaning of v. 20 is obscure.

At the close of the verses Reyher adds, as part of the inscription, the words which, as appears from the letter of Professor Thayer, are to be found appended to it to-day.

* They possess, as has been pointed out by Promis, a trait frequent in mediæval Latin verse, but which is not markedly characteristic of Dante's

and events with which Dante can hardly be supposed to have had even hearsay acquaintance, and in which he can scarcely have felt interest. Not a single Dantesque trait appears in the verses, and the ascription of them to Dante may be safely rejected as false.

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genuine verse, namely, the employment of phrases and epithets derived from the Aeneid. For instance: —

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| v. 2. me olim genuere parentes. | |
| qui tanti talem genuere parentes. | <i>Aen.</i> i. 606 and x. 597. |
| v. 6. montano flumine. | <i>Aen.</i> ii. 305. |
| v. 8. proelia dura subit. | |
| proelia virgo Dura pati. | <i>Aen.</i> vii. 807-8. |
| v. 9. victricibus armis. | |
| victriciaque arma. | <i>Aen.</i> iii. 54. |
| v. 17. sed terga dederunt. | |
| versi terga dedere. | <i>Aen.</i> ix. 686. |